



[Home](#) › [Articles](#) › Insights into hours worked, May 2020

Insights into hours worked, May 2020

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On this page

[Hours worked and employment growth](#)

[Hours worked ranges](#)

[Flows between hours worked categories between April and May](#)

[Underemployment](#)

[Reduced hours](#)

[Further information](#)

Hours worked and employment growth

Hours worked reduced by 9.5% (revised from 9.2%) between March and April in seasonally adjusted terms, which was double the decrease in employed people (4.7%). After this large fall in April, the decline in hours worked slowed considerably into May, with hours worked reducing by 0.7% between April and May.

Whereas in April there was a much larger decrease in hours worked than employment, between April and May the decrease in employed people (1.8%) exceeded the decrease in hours worked.

Charts 1, 2 and 3 show the monthly changes in seasonally adjusted hours worked and employment for all people, men and women. Of particular note is the slight increase in hours worked for women (up 0.7%) in May, following a particularly large decrease in April (12.0%). Male hours worked continued to decline (down 1.7%), following a 7.7% fall in April.

Chart 1: Monthly change in employment and hours worked



Source: 6202.0 Tables 1 and 19

Chart 2: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Males



Source: 6202.0 Tables 1 and 19

Chart 3: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Females



Source: 6202.0 Tables 1 and 19

Hours worked ranges

The overall reductions in hours worked can also be considered in terms of changes in the number of people working within various hours ranges.

Table 1 shows the distribution of employed men and women across the hours worked categories in May, compared with the previous 5 years, to control for seasonality.

Controlling for seasonality in May data is easier than in many other months, because of the absence of school holidays, low number of public holidays, and other seasonal factors.

There was a larger percentage of employed men and women who worked zero hours in May 2020 than in previous years, as was also seen in April 2020.

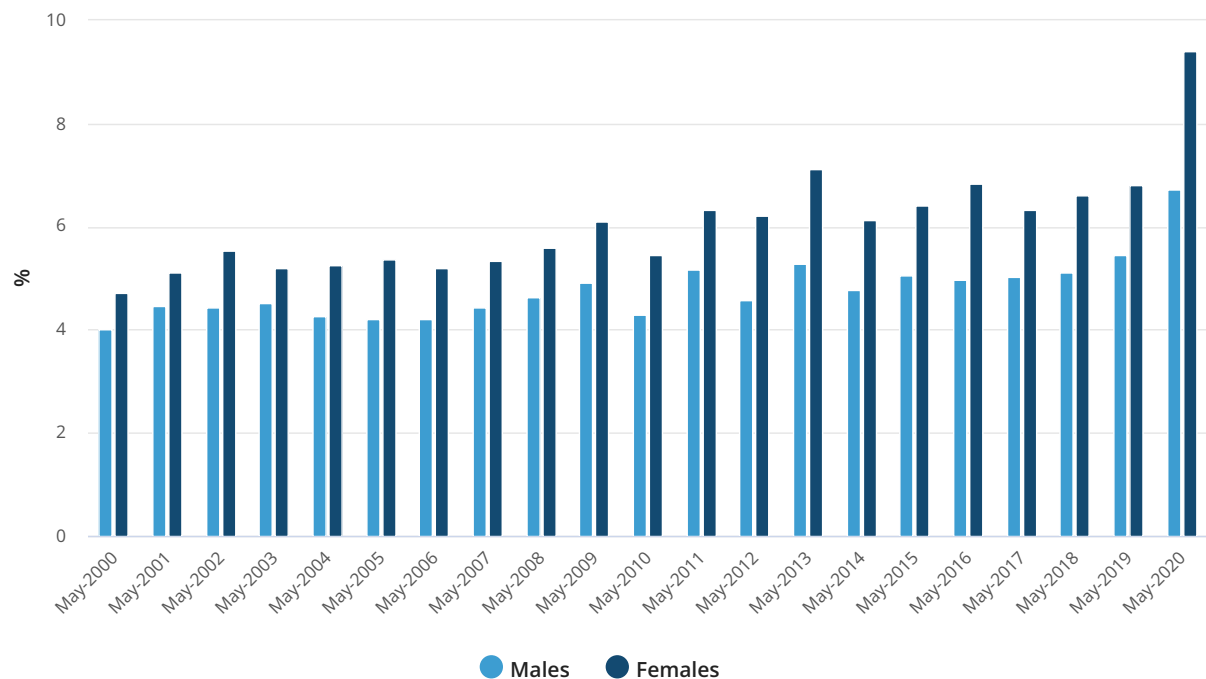
Table 1: Distribution of hours worked in all jobs, Males and Females, Original

	Males						Females					
	0 hrs	1-19 hrs	20-34 hrs	35-44 hrs	45-59 hrs	60+ hrs	0 hrs	1-19 hrs	20-34 hrs	35-44 hrs	45-59 hrs	60+ hrs
May-15	5.1%	9.5%	13.9%	39.4%	21.8%	10.3%	6.4%	20.8%	27.6%	32.6%	9.6%	3.0%
May-16	5.0%	10.0%	15.6%	39.3%	20.2%	10.1%	6.8%	21.4%	28.5%	30.9%	9.5%	2.9%
May-17	5.0%	9.9%	15.2%	39.7%	20.3%	9.9%	6.3%	20.9%	29.2%	31.1%	9.4%	3.0%
May-18	5.1%	9.9%	15.5%	40.1%	20.0%	9.4%	6.6%	20.8%	29.3%	31.4%	9.0%	2.9%
May-19	5.5%	10.4%	15.5%	40.6%	19.3%	8.8%	6.8%	20.0%	29.2%	32.3%	9.0%	2.6%
May-20	6.7%	11.3%	17.6%	39.9%	16.8%	7.8%	9.4%	20.7%	28.8%	30.7%	7.8%	2.6%

Source: 6291.0.55.001 Table 9

Chart 4 shows that the proportions of employed males and females who worked zero hours were greater in May 2020 than in any May over the past 20 years.

Chart 4: Proportion of employed working zero hours



Source: 6291.0.55.001 Table 9

Flows between hours worked categories between April and May

Table 2 shows the proportion of people in each of the hours worked categories in May by their hours of work in April.

It shows that of the employed people who worked zero hours in May:

- 45% also worked zero hours in April (over 400,000 people) - indicating that they have been paid for at least some of the past 4 weeks; and
- 14% were not employed in April (over 100,000 people) - again, indicating that they received some pay despite not working any hours.

There were also over 450,000 people who moved from working zero hours in April to not employed in May.

Table 2: Flows in hours worked ranges between April and May

Hours worked in May							
Hours worked in April	0 hrs	1-19 hrs	20-34 hrs	35-44 hrs	45-59 hrs	60+ hrs	Not employed*
0 hrs	45.2%	14.5%	9.4%	5.7%	4.5%	4.5%	5.7%
1-19 hrs	11.5%	51.3%	13.8%	3.1%	3.2%	2.1%	1.5%
20-34 hrs	13.1%	15.1%	48.6%	23.4%	10.5%	5.7%	0.9%
35-44 hrs	9.9%	5.1%	20.5%	56.1%	28.4%	13.1%	0.7%
45-59 hrs	3.8%	2.1%	3.5%	8.2%	44.6%	25.7%	0.1%
60+ hrs	2.1%	0.5%	0.6%	1.5%	7.7%	47.1%	0.1%
Not employed*	14.4%	11.3%	3.5%	2.0%	1.1%	1.8%	91.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Unpublished data

*Not employed includes all people who were unemployed or not in the labour force.

Underemployment

The number of underemployed people fell by 109,500 people to 1.7 million people. As a result, the underemployment rate decreased by 0.7 pts, to 13.1%.

This net change in the number of underemployed people mainly reflected underemployed

part-time workers in April indicating that they no longer preferred to work more hours in May, but also reflected underemployed full-time workers in April (i.e. who worked less than 35 hours for economic reasons in April) who worked more than 35 hours in May (hence, were no longer underemployed).

There were also some notable flows of:

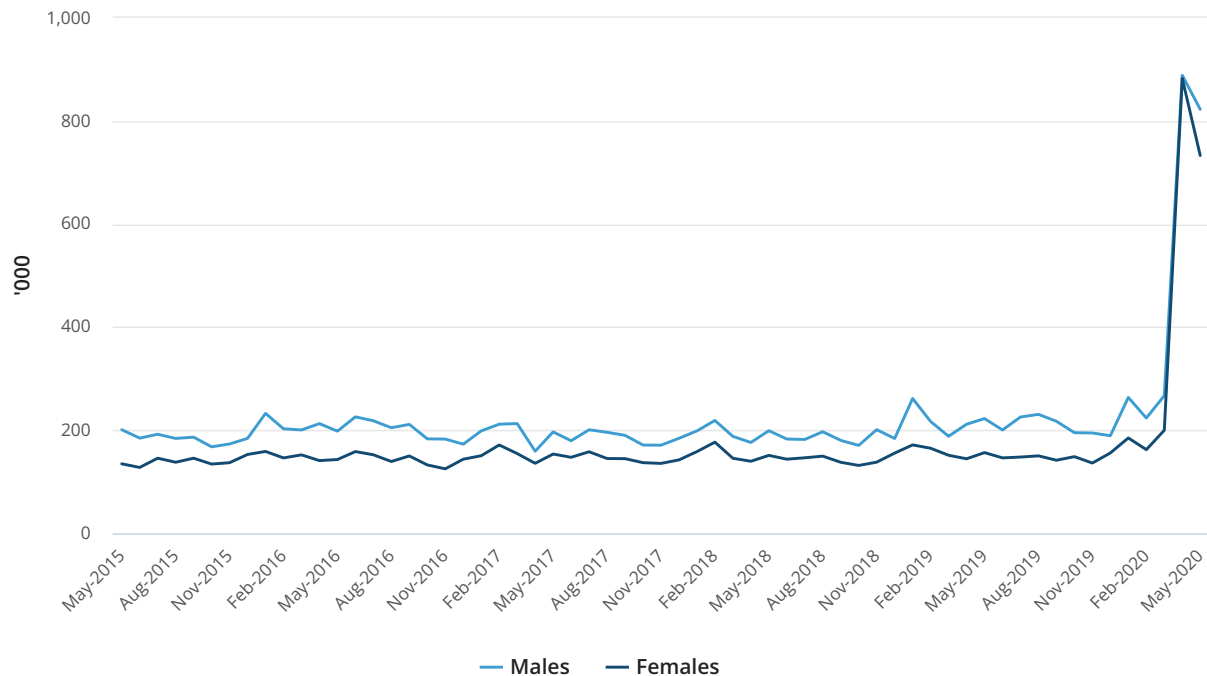
- underemployed part-time workers in April who were not employed in May;
- underemployed full-time workers in April who were employed part-time in May (but did not indicate they would prefer (and were available) to work more hours); and
- underemployed full-time workers in April who were not employed in May.

Reduced hours

Chart 5 shows the number of men and women working fewer than their usual hours, or no hours at all. There were around 1.55 million people who worked fewer than their usual hours for economic reasons in May 2020, a decrease of approximately 200,000 people from April 2020. This comprises:

- around 730,000 'underemployed full-time workers';
- over 170,000 full-time workers who remained full-time; and
- around 640,000 part-time workers.

Chart 5: Employed people working fewer than their usual hours, or no hours at all



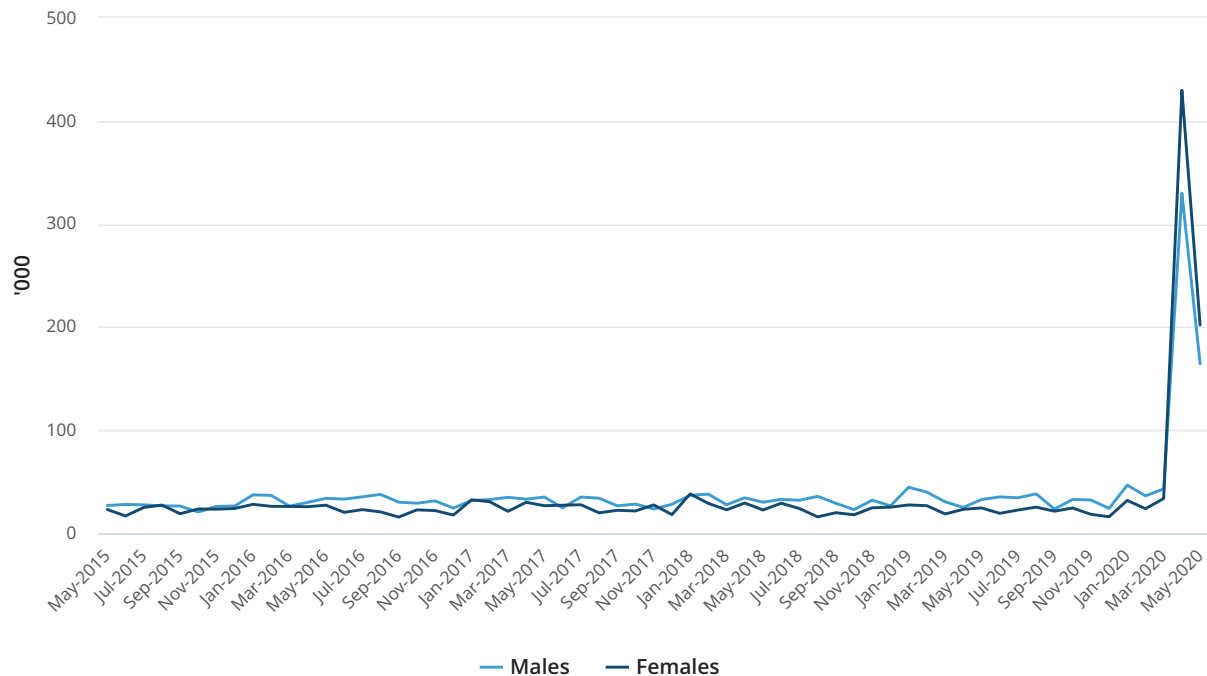
Source: 6291.0.55.001 Data Cube EM2a

Of these 1.55 million employed people who worked less than their usual hours for economic reasons:

- over 360,000 did not work at all; and
- around 1.2 million people worked some hours, but fewer hours than they usually work.

Chart 6 shows that the number of men and women working zero hours for economic reasons declined considerably between April and May.

Chart 6: Employed people working zero hours, Males and Females



Source: 6291.0.55.001 Data Cube EM2a

Further information

For further information, email labour.statistics@abs.gov.au
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